Info@starklawlibrary.org

BEGINNERS   A Document Database

**The email address, info@starklaw library.org really works! TRY IT!!**

In the past few months we have covered several uses for databases such as creating a cast of characters or a case chronology. There is one more use that you should consider - a document database.

> Modern law firms are knee-deep in information -- paper and electronic -- but finding the one document a case might turn on is often left to serendipity or the memory of a savant paralegal.
>
> The obvious solution is to put all of that information into a searchable database, but this usually involves document imaging and coding, which is not always as simple as it might sound. Some key issues should be considered before building a database. [1]

These issues include:

1) Whether or not you actually NEED a documents database. If you need to look through more than two or three files to locate critical pieces of information, or need to share this information with others, you probably need a database to locate information in a timely manner.
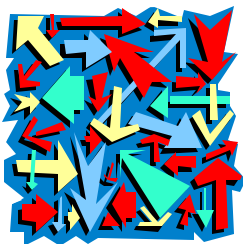
2) Will most members of your firm take the time to learn to use the search features of the database? This can be a really tough question, but is the most important.

3) If you have come to the conclusion that a document database is for you, the next consideration is IMAGING (converting paper to electronic format) and CODING (collecting key information from each document, i.e. author, recipient, Bates number, doc type, date. You must decide whether to do-it-yourself or outsource the job.

4) TECHNICAL issues need to be addressed. Is your current hardware and software up to the task? How about location and format of the database – CD-ROM, hosted off-site, or LAN (local area network)? Security will be a big consideration if you are thinking about an off-site location with remote access.

5) SPEED and COST are also very important considerations. Buying a knowledge management program that will perform simple coding will probably be less costly and faster than using human coders, but what

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you gain in speed and cost, you lose in accuracy and detail. Some programs have the option of allowing human editing of the coded fields, enhancing the database with complex analysis of each document and performing quality control reviews. For a low volume of documents, in-house scanning will be fine, but for higher page counts, a professional imaging vendor would be a better and more economical choice, but be sure to check their work out carefully before choosing a vendor. [2]

Intermediate   Track Changes

Using the "track changes" option in Word and Excel are very dangerous for lawyers because they result in "meta-data" being added to the document which can include who made the changes, when and even worse, the changes themselves!

The use of "track changes" is important enough a problem that Microsoft, in its "Knowledge Base," recommends that lawyers rely on a third-party application such as Lexis-Nexis' CompareRite, ("NOTE: LexisNexis has retired the CompareRite software as of February 1, 2002."[3]) or Workshare's Deltaview <http://www. workshare.net/products/ pr_dv_overview.htm>, because "Word's compare documents feature does not produce as good a result as the third party products mentioned above." [4]

A good replacement for Compare-Rite, if you don't have a third-party application and are in the market for one is "Diff Doc" from SoftInterface. <http://www.softinterface.com/MD/ Comparerite-Replacement.htm>

Other metadata that is obtainable "by opening a document in a low-level binary file editor include:

- Your name
- Your initials
- Your company or organization name
- The name of your computer
- The name of the network server or hard disk on which you saved the document
- Other file properties and summary information
- Non-visible portions of embedded OLE objects
- The names of previous document authors
- Document revisions
- Document versions

Track Changes (Continued)

- Template information
- Hidden text Comments" [5]

Microsoft offers five pages of explanation and directions for using track changes, "How to Track and Manage Changes in a Word Document," at: <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;q305216> and ten pages of directions for **minimizing** metadata from Word 2002 at: <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;[LN];290945>.

But the best ways to avoid these dangers are:

1. Use a metadata removal program such as "Metadata Assistant" from Payne Consulting. <http://www.payneconsulting.com/public/products/default.asp>
2. Don't send out Word documents - Use WordPerfect, plain text or RTF's.
3. If you don't have to have an editable file, send files out as PDF documents.
4. Also, check out the blog "PDF for Lawyers: Tips on using Adobe Acrobat in a Litigation Practice" <http://www.pdfforlawyers.com/> for more ideas.

ADVANCED   An Introduction to KM

Firms cannot implement KM in the abstract, without defining purposes and goals.

First of all, KM stands for knowledge management. Martin Kingsley, in one article states that KM "... in itself defies simple definition." [6] But in another article, Kingsley offers the following definition:

Knowledge management can be broadly defined as the identification and management of processes for leveraging the intellectual capital of organizations over time and place. As such it applies to every job function and process and seeks to capture institutional learning and share best practices for the benefit of the entire firm and its clients." [7]

In yet another article on the topic he gives us a much more tangible definition:

...to manage and share information on cases and processes with colleagues so that the firm's legal professionals collaborate with one another… [and] focus their energies on working more efficiently and effectively as a team so that young associates and senior partners can use the same intellectual assets to find and share information with one another. [8]

Kingsley also states: "Firms cannot implement KM in the abstract, without defining purposes and goals. Without agreed goals for KM, how can a firm realistically expect to measure -- and achieve -- success?

Anecdotal evidence suggests that knowledge management is 20 percent technology (which is sometimes expensive) and 80 percent culture

An Introduction to KM (Continued)

reviews. For a low volume of documents, in-house scanning will be fine, but for higher page counts, a professional imaging vendor would be a better and more economical choice, but be sure to check their work out carefully before choosing a vendor. [2]

FOOTNOTES

[1 & 2] Johnson, V. Lee. "Creating a Database From Documents." Law.Com 2 January 2003. ALM Properties, Inc. 10 July 2003. <http://www.law.com/jsp/newswire_article.jsp?id=1039054510860> (Free registration required)

[3] "CompareRite." LexisNexis. 2003 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. 14 July 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/custserv/compare.asp>

[4] "Track Changes." Microsoft Office: Tools on the Web." 2001. Microsoft Corporation. 14 July 2003.<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/legal/track%20changes.asp>

[5] "How To: Minimize Metadata in Microsoft Word 2002. Microsoft Product Support Services. 2003 Microsoft Corporation. 14 July 2003. <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;[LN];290945#2>

[6 & 9] Martin, Kingsley. "Knowledge Management: Beyond Nirvana." Law Technology News. 26 June 2003. <http://www.law.com/jsp/newswire_article.jsp?id=1056139878062> (Free registration required)

[7] Martin, Kingsley. "Evaluating the Benefits of Knowledge Management." Modern Practice. April 2003. FindLaw. 15 July 2003. <http://practice.findlaw.com/archives/feature_0403.html>

[8] Martin, Kingsley. "KM: What's In It For You?" Modern Practice. April 2003. FindLaw. 16 July 2003. <http://practice.findlaw.com/archives/tooltalk_0403.html>

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